

Psalm 58

To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David.

Psalm 58: The psalm may best be described as a prayer against unjust judges. "O congregation" (in verse 1), is literally "O gods", though the word is best taken here to refer, not to gods, but to rulers who represent God. God and civil leaders are sometimes closely linked together (Exodus 22:28; Deut. 19:17-18). The indictment against these unjust judges is contained in (verses 1-5); the petition of David in (verses 6-9), includes a mighty imprecation; and the conclusion emphasizes the effect of God's vindication on the righteous in (verses 10 and 11).

Verses 1-11: As a lament against tyranny, the first half of the psalm rehearses a series of charges against wicked leaders and judges; and the second half is an imprecatory prayer (imprecatory psalms are those psalms that contain curses or prayers for the punishment of the psalmist's enemies), that they be obliterated in the end, the psalmist is certain that God will act with ultimate justice.

- I. The Indictment of Unjust Leaders (58:1-5)
- II. The Imprecation Against Unjust Leaders 58:6-11)

Title: "Altaschith" (see note on Psalm 57: Title; and note on Psalm 16: Title).

Psalm 58:1 "Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?"

A bold protest is made against unrighteous judges (derisively called "congregation"), who deliberately perverted justice while pretending to uphold it.

"O congregation": The leaders were silent when they should have spoken up for righteousness.

The key word in this is "congregation". Who were the congregation that David was speaking of here? The Israelites who received the law of God on the way to the Promised Land were spoken of as the congregation. This is not the world around them, but the descendants of these Israelites. These are people who profess God. They would be called sons of God, if they were living up to their high calling. Notice though, that David speaks of them as sons of men. The only way to speak righteousness is to have Jesus Christ dwelling inside of you. David is saying to them that, they are pretending to be followers of God when, in fact, they are of the world. A person who is not righteous cannot judge uprightly.

Psalm 58:2 "Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth."

So far were they from speaking righteousness, and judging uprightly. The heart of man is wickedness itself; it is desperately wicked, and is the shop in which all wickedness is wrought. For sinful acts are committed there as well as by the tongue and hand, as follows. This phrase

also denotes their sinning. Not with precipitancy, and through surprise; but with premeditation and deliberation. And their doing it heartily, with good will, and with allowance. And their continuance and constant persisting in it.

"Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth": They were guilty of acts of violence and oppression. Which, of all men, judges should not be guilty of. These wicked rulers meditate on the strategy for wicked schemes. Whose business it is to plead the cause of the injured and oppressed, to right their wrongs, and to protect and defend them. These they pretended to weigh in the balance of justice and equity, and committed them under a show of righteousness. They decreed unrighteous decrees, and framed mischief by a law. And this they did openly, and everywhere, throughout the whole land.

We see not only people who are pretending to be believers and are not, but they have a very evil heart. In fact, they are so evil that they are using their hands for evil purposes and not good. Even worse than that, they are proud of their evil deeds. To weigh violence in the earth is a way of saying, they are bragging about their evil.

Psalm 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

"Are estranged from the womb": All people are born totally depraved. Without being made new creatures in Christ by God's power, they are prevented by their wicked nature from pleasing God (compare Psalm 51:5; Rom. 3:9-18; 2 Cor. 5:17).

We know from the gospel teachings that John the Baptist was baptized with the Holy Ghost while he was yet in his mother's womb. His entire life was dedicated to God. He even died a martyr at an early age. The person (in verse 3 above), is the opposite of John the Baptist. The wicked above is estranged from God, even from his mother's womb. His entire life is spent doing evil. He is a liar as well. You would have to say the wicked (in verse 3), is a servant of the devil. This person has chosen the devil over God.

Psalm 58:4 "Their poison [is] like the poison of a serpent: [they are] like the deaf adder [that] stoppeth her ear;"

"Their poison is like": The words and actions of these tyrants are like poisonous venom in a serpent's fangs.

"Deaf adder": Like a cobra which cannot hear its charmer are these stubborn rulers, who ignore all encouragements to righteousness.

The poison under the tongue of the evil man can kill just as easily as the poison of a serpent. There is no chance of them being saved, because they have to hear and believe to be saved.

Romans 10:14 "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

We see, in the verse above, that they are as deaf as the serpent itself.

Psalm 58:5 "Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

Serpent charmers are alluded to in (Eccl 10:11 and Jer. 6:17). They have at all times been common in the East, as they are still in India. And it is with reason suspected that the magicians of Pharaoh employed the art in their contest with Moses and Aaron.

"Charming never so wisely": Literally, though they bind their spells skillfully.

You can talk to the evil people this is talking about all day long, and it will not convince them. They are sold out to the devil. It seems nothing will reach them.

Psalm 58:6 "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD."

"Break their teeth ... great teeth": The psalmist prays that the means of doing evil would be destroyed.

David is asking God to render them harmless. If they will not open their ears and receive the Lord, then don't let them loose where they can harm the cause. The sad thing about all of this is, we have to go back to the word. In some churches even today, there are those who are in the church to destroy it, and not to build it up. Even in the 12 apostles Jesus chose to help him, there was one whose father was the devil. Paul warned that the churches would have evil ones who would come in and try to destroy the church.

Acts 20:28-30 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

It is no different now than it was in Paul's day. Pray that God will give you discernment to know who are the destroyers. Pray God will lock their jaw, where they will not be able to destroy with their tongue.

Psalm 58:7 "Let them melt away as waters [which] run continually: [when] he bendeth [his bow to shoot] his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces."

"Melt away as waters": An imprecatory prayer that the tyrants would disappear like water seeping into sand in a dry wadi.

"Arrows ... cut in pieces": Apparently a prayer that the intentions of evil would be rendered as ineffective as broken arrows.

If they are bound up where they cannot perform their evil deeds, then they will soon leave this church and go to another that is a little more vulnerable. Again, he is just saying, render them harmless.

Psalm 58:8 "As a snail [which] melteth, let [every one of them] pass away: [like] the untimely birth of a woman, [that] they may not see the sun."

“Snail ... which melteth”: A simile for that which is transitive, perhaps based facetiously on the idea that a snail depletes itself in its own trail as it moves along. As a snail when it comes out of its shell liquefies, drops its moisture, and with it makes a "path", from whence it has its name in the Hebrew language. And so the Targum here, "as the snail moistens its way;" which moistness it gradually exhausts, and melts away, and dies. So the psalmist prays that every one of his enemies might die in like manner. Some think reference is had to the snail's putting out its horns to no purpose when in danger, and apply it to the vain threatenings of the wicked. A strange difference this, between a roaring young lion (Psalm 58:6), and a melting snail. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, render it, "as wax which melteth" (see Psalm 68:2).

"Like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun": (See Job 3:16). The Targum is, "as an abortive and a mole, which are blind and see not the sun." Nor enjoy the favor of God, and the light of his countenance; nor have the light of life, or eternal glory and happiness (see Psalm 49:19).

David has gone so far as to say, let them die early. Usually a baby that is born really early will not live, this is the comparison David has made here.

Psalm 58:9 "Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in [his] wrath."

“Before your pots ... thorns”: An obscure metaphor implying swiftness. The Lord will quickly destroy the wicked rulers.

This perhaps, is speaking of their untimely death. The whirlwind will blow them away. It is also speaking prophetically of the end, when the wrath of God will be poured out on the wicked. They have no security in this life, and surely have nothing to look forward to in the next.

Psalm 58:10 "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked."

“Wash his feet in the blood”: The point of the figure is that the wicked will eventually be defeated and the righteous will share with the Lord in His victory.

Vengeance is the Lord's. Perhaps this is speaking of the righteous rejoicing to know that God is a just God, and He does not allow the wicked to go on forever in their wickedness. The fact of the blood of the evil ones being on the feet of the righteous could possibly mean that at last they have been trodden under foot and defeated. Jesus is the one who defeated the evil one. Surely His enemies shall be trodden under His feet.

Psalm 58:11 "So that a man shall say, Verily [there is] a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

God rewards "the righteous" (1 Cor. 3:11-15). Time will remove doubts, solve difficulties, and deliver justice.

"God that judgeth in the earth": In the end, the righteous will see that Jehovah is not indifferent to injustices.

There is a day coming when it will be very apparent that the righteous will be rewarded. Their greatest reward will be eternal life in heaven with Jesus.

Matthew 16:27 "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Colossians 3:24 "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

Not only in heaven is the reward for the righteous, but there is the reward of peace in your soul right here on this earth, when you receive the righteousness of Christ. As we have said over and over in these lessons, God blesses those who are His followers; those who have made Jesus Christ Lord of their lives. Those who have rejected the Lord have curses abundant waiting for them.

Psalm 58 Questions

1. Who is congregation speaking of in verse 1?
2. Why are these people in verse 1, not called sons of God?
3. What are they called?
4. They are pretending to be whom?
5. The wickedness of the evil ones in verse 2, is rooted where?
6. What is the saying, "to weigh violence of your hands in the earth" speaking of?
7. When was John the Baptist baptized in the Holy Ghost?
8. Who is the wicked person in verse 3, a servant of?
9. The poison _____ of the evil man is just as deadly as the serpent bite.
10. What does charming mean in verse 5?

11. In verse 6, what is David asking God to do when he says, break their teeth?
12. How can we apply the congregation then, to our church now?
13. What did Paul warn of in Acts chapter 20, that would happen to the church?
14. What should we pray to keep this from happening to our church?
15. What will the evil ones do, if they are bound up where they can do no harm?
16. What comparison is David making in verse 8 of this lesson?
17. What is verse 9 speaking of prophetically?
18. Who does vengeance belong to?
19. Who defeated the evil one?
20. There is a reward for the _____.
21. What reward do the righteous receive in this life?
22. What do the evil have waiting for them?